

**October 9, 2012**  
**Dyne House Auditorium, Highgate School, London**

## **A Recital of Music by Graham Waterhouse (OC)**

with members of the Munich Philharmonic, Valentina Babor and the composer

**Hungarian Polyphony** op. 24 for string quartet (1987)

**Praeludium** op. 32 for piano (1993)

**Prophetiae Sibyllarum** for string quartet (2012) (UK premiere)

**Zeichenstaub** for string trio (2006) (UK premiere)

**Rhapsodie Macabre** for piano and string quartet (2011) (UK premiere)

**Valentina Babor**, piano

**Clément Courtin**, violin

**Namiko Fuse**, violin

**Konstantin Sellheim**, viola

**Graham Waterhouse**, cello

### **Hungarian Polyphony**

This single movement work began in London in 1984 as a trio for two violins and cello (for outdoor use at the Covent Garden Market, the brusque opening chords designed to catch the attention of passers by). It was enlarged into a string quartet in 1986 and the first run through was at the National Chamber Music Course the same year. The work was subsequently shown to the conductor Sergiu Celibidache, who suggested further re-writing and arranged for the work to be performed by members of the Schleswig-Holstein Orchestra at the 1988 Festival. It was published in 2000.

The work is built around two principal themes. After the chordal opening the first appears, irregular in meter and largely based on a scale with sharpened fourth and flattened seventh, common to Hungarian folk music. The resultant ambiguous colouring (D major/E major) pervades the entire work. The second theme, based on a triadic motif is introduced fugally and later appears in a bitonal version. Midway through the piece the momentum is suddenly halted by a brief Adagio before the apotheosis of the work in which the two main themes are contrapuntally combined. The work closes with a reappearance of the opening chords.

### **Praeludium**

This virtuoso composition was written in 1992 and premiered in London in 1993. Two themes are juxtaposed: a rhythmic-chromatic one and a lyrical theme with complex chordal superimpositions which are further developed in a cadenza before a recapitulation of the opening material. A coda with bravura cascades of octaves and sevenths closes the work.

## Prophetiae Sibyllarum

Moderato e risoluto

Scherzo e Trio – Presto con vehemenza – meno mosso

Motet (Lassus) – Adagio

Vivace

The title (The Prophecies of Sibille) is taken from a cycle of motets by Orlando di Lassus, once Hofkapellmeister in Munich. These are late 16th century settings of mystical, pre-Christian religious texts prophesying the life and mission of Christ. Attributed to the oracle Sibille, it is unclear how these originally profane texts came later to be used in a religious context. Lassus' motets are famous less for the texts, however, than for the truly remarkable chromatic writing, both within his own oeuvre and within that of his contemporaries, stretching the strict, formal conventions of Renaissance part-writing to their absolute limits. Within the first eight bars of the motet all twelve degrees of the scale are used.

Certain aspects of the motet, thematic, contrapuntal and in terms of voice-leading pervade the first, second and fourth movements. Just as the motet sets standard cadential formulae against unforeseen chromaticisms progressions so the quartet juxtaposes predominantly diatonic passages with more dissonant writing.

The pair of three-note motivic cells heard at the outset are derived from the chromatic opening of the motet. These become the musical pillars on which the entire movement is built. A striking compositional aspect of the motet is the combination of narrower intervals in the upper parts, set against wider intervals in the bass, a phenomenon mirrored in the part-writing in the string quartet, especially the strident 2nd subject, set over ostinato chord patterns.

The 2nd movement, a Scherzo, uses predominantly the descending (later ascending) minor third. The opening motive is developed in 6-bar phrases, building tension through constantly varied repetition. A Trio section, based on open string-crossing and pizzicato cello chords recalls the rustic Ländler-style of those gnarled, peasant hurdy-gurdy players seen on rural landscape scenes by 16th century Netherlands Masters.

The third movement presents Lassus' motet itself in its original form. The core of the entire work, this is the Urschrift of an imaginary palimpsest, illuminating the way after all additional texts and scribblings have been symbolically stripped away.

The last movement, in 9/8 meter, is a kind of Rondo, each couplet reflecting a line of the Motet. The final line appears maestoso, soaring above the pulsating, agitato rhythm in the cello part.

## **Zeichenstaub**

Halcyon – Allegro energico  
Ethereal – Adagio tranquillo  
Pointilliste – Moderato  
Perpetuum – Allegro con moto

The title (literally: symbol-dust) is taken from a poem written by Damian Hosp (alias Kaspar Hepp) which in its turn was written in response to an early black and white photograph of a skier. The poem describes the curving tracks carved out by the skis and the powdery snow thrown up in the wake of the skier as he negotiates a steep slope of fresh snow. The idea of clear lines set against blurred textures as suggested by this intriguing word was a starting point in the composition of the piece. The initials of the four movements of Zeichenstaub add up to the name of the dedicatees, the Hepp family of Cologne.

Each movement is more or less mono-thematic, exploring a single gestus within its own sound-world. The first movement, robust, and mostly in the Doric mode, opens with a terse motive of rising fifths, set against syncopated, open fifths in the violin. Halcyon (as in "Halcyon days") refers to a period of confidence and optimism before impending doom. The second movement is a study in otherworldliness and weightlessness and consists almost entirely of harmonics, pizzicato and glissandi. The perfect intervals of fourth, fifth and octave dominate the string writing. The third movement, pizzicato throughout, aims to re-create in musical terms the painting technique of Pointillism, using the juxtaposition of unrelated chords to create a bright and vivid harmonic tableau. Techniques such as string-slapping, portamenti and double-stopping enhance the palette of sonorities. In the final movement, quasi moto perpetuo, the material continually transforms and re-invents itself with an urgency and rhythmic drive that finally leads the work to an energetic close.

## **Rhapsodie Macabre**

This work was composed between September and October 2011 as the closing work of the 2011 Munich Liszt Festival. The original intention was to write a scaled down piano concerto, combining virtuosic concertante elements in the piano with an integrated chamber music style. The work is through-composed, though subdivided into five clearly defined sections.

During the writing the spirit of Abbé Liszt never seemed far off. It was mainly compositional elements which, either consciously or subconsciously, informed the writing as the piece unfolded. These include:

- virtuosic piano writing, integrated into the string-writing
- characteristic harmonic colour through the piling up of similar intervals e.g. chords of thirds (3rd movement), fourths (4th movement), fifths (2nd movement)
- timbre as a structural device – delineating form by extremes of high and low texture, as well as by the return of percussive elements
- the recurrence and transformation of "idees fixes" themes (notably the Dies irae theme) throughout the work

The five sections of the piece are:

**Allegro alla toccata**, dominated by a piano figuration of alternating black and white notes. The two subsidiary themes are heard, one of these the Dies irae theme taken from Gregorian plain-chant.

**Presto precipitando – quasi Scherzo**, The Dies irae theme appears both in lyrical as well as in satirical guise

**Adagio lusingando** – a widely-spanning cantabile line is first introduced in the strings, taken over by the piano, then appears in dialogue between piano and first violin

**Vivace** – a demonic scherzo in 6/8 time, further developing the ascending triadic motive from the second movement. A transitional section based on the Dies irae leads directly into

**Con moto giusto** – A further chromatic theme is introduced. In the course of the movement all of the main themes from the previous movements reappear as a summation of the work. A coda – Presto – steers back to the Phrygian tonal centre on the note “e” on which the work began.

**Graham Waterhouse** was born in London in 1962 into a musical family and has been based in Munich since 1992. He was educated at Highgate School, Cambridge University and at Folkwang Hochschule in Essen and Hochschule für Musik Köln, where, besides cello, chamber music and composition, his studies included piano, organ and conducting. He is currently involved in a Composition PhD at the Birmingham City University.

As composer and as cellist he has been involved with both piano and string chamber music most of his playing life. For 12 years he has organised a concert series in the Gasteig Arts Centre in Munich in conjunction with the Munich Arts Council, in which contemporary works appear alongside works from the classical repertory. His collaboration with members of the Munich Philharmonic has resulted in a number of premieres including two string quartets as well as works for wind instruments and strings. In October 2011 he was entrusted with planning the final concert of the Munich Liszt Festival and his Piano Quintet was premiered alongside other works by the composer and works by Liszt.

Besides performing in such combinations as Piano Trio, Cello Quartet and Piano Quintet, he has worked with contemporary music groups such as "Ensemble Modern" (Frankfurt), "MusikFabrik NRW" and "oh ton", participating in premieres of works by composers such as Iannis Xenakis, Beat Furrer and Klaus Huber.

Among his commissions are works for the Munich Biennale, the International Double Reed Society, the Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival and the Park Lane Group, London. Recent performances of his works in UK have included Swaledale Festival in Yorkshire, the Stratford Festival (a work for clarinettist Emma Johnson) and Wigmore Hall (Epitaphium for string trio). He has performed his own Cello Concerto op. 27 in Mexico City, Nizhny Novgorod, Weimar, Baden-Baden, Idstein and Cambridge.

His music has appeared on CD, notably on "Portrait" (Cybele, 2001) with works for piano, clarinet and cello; and "Portrait 2" (Meridian, 2004) with music for string orchestra (English Chamber Orchestra) and for wind ensemble (Endymion).

In 1998 Graham Waterhouse was featured composer at the International Double Reed congress in Arizona, in 2001 "composer in residence" of the „Solisten der Kammerphilharmonie Berlin", in 2006 "artiste en residence" in Albertville (France) and in 2008 "Musician By-Fellow" at Churchill College, Cambridge (UK). Since its founding in 1984 he has been "composer in residence" at the National Chamber Music Course in Hitchin, UK and since 1996 at the "Streicherfreizeit" course in Bavaria. In 2012 he won the Birmingham Chamber Music Society prize for his Quartet "Chinese Whispers".

His specific knowledge of the acoustic and technical characteristics of the instruments give his music an immediacy and sense of communication to his compositions. Chamber music is a preferred genre for the nature of the dialogue between players in performance, and also between the player and composer, skills of both disciplines of which are required in balancing the formal, technical and expressive aspects of the composition. Clarity of structure, organic development of the material, the logical succession of tension and release all inform the creative progress of a composition. He considers harmony as the driving force of a piece insofar as it is in alignment with the melodic material. Classically trained, he makes use of traditional forms such as contrapuntal and Sonata forms, though seen always through contemporary eyes, with new perspectives on the original patterns informed by the widely experienced player in diverse fields of repertoire.

**Clément Courtin** was born in Lille and began playing the violin at the age of eight. From 1995 to 1997 he studied in Paris. He then joined Igor Oistrakh's class in Brussels, graduating with a master's degree in 2005. From 1997 to 2002, Courtin was concert master of the Amadeus Chamber Orchestra in France, with which he also made solo guest appearances in several countries including Norway, China and Japan. He became a regular member of the second violin section in the Munich Philharmonic in 2006. Besides his orchestral activities, Clément Courtin also participates in a number of chamber music projects and in 2008, he performed the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto with the Siemens Orchestra at the Herkulessaal in Munich.

**Konstantin Sellheim** began the violin at the age of six. His viola studies were at the University of the Arts in Berlin, and from 2004 with Wilfried Strehle from the Berlin Philharmonic. Konstantin Sellheim was a prize winner at the 2004 International Rostal Competition in Berlin and has been a guest of the Berlin Philharmonic as well as such international festivals as the Berlin and Vienna Festival Weeks. Konstantin Sellheim made his first solo appearance with the Hamburg Philharmonic at an early age. Concert tours have taken him throughout Europe, to the United States and Japan. In 2004 he became a member of the Staatskapelle in Berlin; since 2006 he is a member of the Munich Philharmonic. Konstantin Sellheim is on the faculty at the University of the Arts in Berlin.

**Namiko Fuse** was born in Tokyo. She began studying the violin at the age of four and made many appearances as soloist in violin concertos and chamber music partner even during her time as a student at the Tokyo Music Academy, from which she graduated with honours. Following this she went to Europe, where she concluded her studies with a master class diploma with Kurt Guntner at the Munich Music Academy. Namiko Fuse has been a member of the Munich Philharmonic since 1990.

**Valentina Babor** was born in Munich. She received her first piano lessons, besides instruction in violin, flute and singing, at the age of five. Aged eight she gave her first piano recital; she was accepted as a pre-college student at the University Mozarteum and at the "Institute for the Promotion of Outstanding Talent" in Salzburg .

Valentina Babor's teachers included Karl-Heinz Kämmerling, Elisso Wirssaladze and Gerhard Oppitz; she has benefited from the advice of the Hungarian pianist András Schiff. From an early age the young pianist successfully competed in the competitions "Jugend musiziert", "Klavierpodium der Jugend" and later in the "Grotian Steinweg Piano Competition".

Since the age of ten, Valentina Babor has made numerous solo and concerto appearances in Salzburg, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Paris, Barcelona, Peking as well as at various international festivals such as "Kissinger Summer", "Braunschweiger Classix", the "Alpen Classic Festival" in Bad Reichenhall, and the "Biennale Film Festival" in Venice.

In 2006 she received the classical music prize "Rising Stars" from the European cultural endowment foundation "Europa musicale".

Besides her activities as soloist, in 2012 Valentina Babor founded a German-French Piano Quintet under the name of "Montgelas Ensemble Munich", focussing mainly on French and German repertoire. Future plans include CD recordings of chamber works by Saint-Saens and Brahms and the complete cycle of piano concertos by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in 2013/2014.

Tonight's concert marks her first appearance in London.